A

LETTER

From the Reverend

Mr. *Jonathan Aſhley*,

To the Reverend

Mr. *William Cooper*.

In Anſwer to his *Objections* to Mr. *Aſhley*'s Sermon; as publiſh'd in the *Boſton Gazette*, *January* 11*th*. 1743.

Reverend Sir,

Received your *Letter* of the Firſt of *December* laſt, juſt as I was leaving the Town, and had not Time then, either to wait upon you, or return you an Anſwer. I ſhould have done it ſooner; but being informed by your's, you ſhould make ſome *publick Remarks* upon *my Sermon*, I ſuppoſed I ſhould have Occaſion to do the ſame upon *your Letter*. And ſince you have been ſo free as to *publiſh* ſome of your *Converſation with me*, I hope you will not be Offended if I inform the World of the *reſt*; and ſince you have publiſhed *part* of your *Letter* to me, hope you will not be Diſpleaſed to ſee the *reſt in Print*; both for your *own Honour* and *my Defence*.

A To

N. B. *The Date of this Letter ſhould have been* Jan. 17. *inſtead of* Decemb. 17.

To begin with *your Converſation*. I perceive there has been ſome Miſunderſtanding in BOSTON, about *Your returning me Thanks*. This is to let the Publick know, *You did give me Thanks in the Pulpit*; for what let the World judge. ---- When at *your Houſe*, you ſaid to me, You was ſorry I had not made one Remark in my Sermon, (*Viz.*) "People need not be prejudiced againſt Religion, ſince there were the *ſame Diſorders* in the *Church* of CORINTH as are in our Churches, in ſuch a time of the out-pouring of the *Spirit* of *God*." I replied, "It was ſo plain every one muſt make it." ---------- You may Remember alſo, (for ſure I do) You told me, "There are *all the Diſorders in the Churches in this Land* that were in the *Church* of CORINTH." ------- You alſo ſaid to me, "There was NOTHING in my Sermon you could BLAME;" and alſo, in your *Letter* you have theſe Words, "I dont remember ANY THING that would not bear the TEST as to the ORTHODOXY of it," and conclude by ſaying, "It would be a great Grief to you to publiſh your Diſlike of the Sermon;" and that, "you are already grieved." --------

Having juſt mentioned theſe things, in your *Converſation* and *Letter*, I proceed to obſerve ſome Things in what you have Inſerted in the *Gazette* of the 11*th* of *January*.

---------- And here I would take Notice in the *Firſt* Place, how ſoon your *Grief* is turned into *bitter Reflections* upon me, as any one cannot but obſerve who reads.

AND,

Secondly, I would obſerve, that you often Digreſs to attack *others* as well as *me*; and your Thoughts frequently run off from my *Sermon* to the Practice of *others*. I ſhant trouble my ſelf about your Reflections upon the *Publiſher* of the *Advertiſement*; nor the Remarks you make upon *others*, who have ſaid or done that which may be diſpleaſing to you.

With

BRITISH MUSEUM

With Regard to me you say, "I could not but be sensible many shew'd their great Dissatisfaction at my Sermon, *some* in the *Time of their Hearing*, and *more after*." It is true, some left the *House* and *Worship of God*, but whether these are the *Children of God*, whom you speak of in your *Letter* to me as *grieved*, I know not; if they are the *Children of God*, I hope they have given better Evidence of their Right to be so called, than what arises from this *indecent Behaviour*: I know nothing of the *Persons*; neither do I know any *such Marks* to Judge the *People of God* by, as their *forsaking* the *publick Worship*. You speak of more who were Dissatisfied *afterwards*. I know of none, but Mr. COOPER and his Honoured MOTHER, Madam F--E, unless I am obliged to think this *Gentlewoman*, who attacked me with SO MUCH VEHEMENCE, spoke the Mind of all the Rest present. *She* did indeed tell me of another Gentlewoman, who made some *Remarks* upon my Sermon, going Home from *Meeting*: And *her Discourse* was such, that if I mistake, while I think the *Zeal* against my *Sermon* was owing, in some Measure, to HER INFLUENCE, I hope you will Pardon me. ----

And now *Sir*, I can tell you, these are not half the Number of those who heard me, and gave me Thanks; and if the *Numbers* should be compared with Regard to *Religion*, perhaps the *latter* would not be *Inferiour*, nor would *you your self* DARE to question the *Piety* of some of them. But then, you go on to tell us, "You are willing the World should know the Sermon was Published *Not* at your Desire." If I have erred in Printing it without first obtaining your Leave, I humbly beg Pardon; it is but a Sin of Ignorance, I knew not till now that Mr. COOPER had been intrusted with the Care of *Inspecting* the *Press*. ----

You say, The Discourse had "an unfriendly Aspect upon the late happy Revival of Religion." But pray, *Sir*, remember "there was NOTHING in the Sermon that could be BLAMED," and it will "bear the TRIAL as to its Orthodoxy." Where then is the Ground to condemn it? Are the several Parts good, and yet the Whole evil? This I can't understand. But you tell us, "it hides the Work of God under a Cloud of Disorders." I answer, No more than the *Apostle* has taught me to do in his *first Epistle* to the *Corinthians*; and I intreat you to consider, whether you don't bear as hard upon the *Apostle* as upon *me*.

You

You then artfully inſinuate (which is as bad as if you had *directly ſaid it*) " that I made a forc'd Conceſſion, " in acknowledging that " God had ſhower'd down his *Spirit* on the Churches in our Land. " Upon which permit me to aſk you, Whether before you remark'd upon this Sermon, you read it with ſerious *Self-Application?* And if not, to pray you to do it, that you may be made *ſenſible* you were not in the Exerciſe of *that Branch* of Charity, which *thinketh no Evil*, but *hopeth all Things*, when this *unchriſtian Surmiſe* came from your Pen. But pray, *Sir*, what *forc'd this Conceſſion?* Be pleas'd to ſpeak out. Something ſeems to lie hid under this *tacit Suggeſtion*; but what, is beſt known to your ſelf.

You then charge me with *not expreſſing any Affection or Concern* for *the good Work*; which I think a very injurious Repreſentation; and my Sermon from the *Beginning* to the *End* is *a clear Proof* of it. *Love to God and our Neighbour*, the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt* has made the *Sum* of *the Work of God*, if by it is meant (what ought to be) a *Work of Grace* wrought in Men by the *Holy Spirit*. And I leave it to the World to judge, whether I have been wanting in diſplaying either the *Nature*, or *Glory*, or *Neceſſity*, of *this Work of God*, with ſuitable *Affection* and *Concern*: I am ſure, if I have, the Fault lay not in my *Will*; it was what I aim'd at, and endeavour'd all I could. Yea, ſuch has been my *Concern* to promote this *good Work*, that I have, after the *Example* of this *great Apoſtle*, borne my faithful Teſtimony againſt thoſe Things which obſtruct and hinder it, and caſt ſo much Blemiſh upon it.

You then think it improper I ſhould ſpeak of " *Diſorders* at BOSTON ----where there are ſo few." I will give one ſufficient Reaſon for it, (*viz.*) the *Appearance* of *ſo many Diſorders*, all the while Mr. DAVENPORT and SOME OTHERS were there, as we have had an Account of them in the *publick Prints*; and even now, I am informed there are *two Societies*, who have rent themſelves from their *ſeveral Churches*, with one of which Mr. COOPER has pray'd, and bleſs'd them; thereby ſaying *God Speed to them.* And you yourſelf have ſupplied me with another Reaſon, (*viz.*) " what is ſaid and done in BOSTON has great Influence in the *Country*. If therefore there are ſuch Diſorders in the Country

Country as you acknowledge; it is a Duty to ſpeak of them in BOSTON that they may be ſuppreſs'd. And if this is done by a *Country Miniſter*, it may poſſibly have *ſome Influence*, if not ſo much as if done by a *Boſton Miniſter*.

You then, after a long Digreſſion from what you enter'd upon, tell the World, what you obſerv'd to me after the Sermon was preached, "That I ought to have remarked, that none need to be prejudiced againſt Religion, *&c.*" and that *I altered my Mind, and put it into the Preface.* But I am of the ſame Mind ſtill, That every Body may make the Remark: And I put it into the *Preface*, that I might not offend Mr. COOPER, nor any of thoſe that might *be grieved* on the Account of ſuch an Omiſſion.

You then make a Reflection, as tho' "ſome *friendly Hand* had altered the Language of the Sermon." But I know of no Alteration from the *Copy* I left; and forgive the Injury here reflected, both on the *Gentleman* that corrected the *Preſs*, and *myſelf*.

You go on to inſinuate, as if I had left out a *Hint* in the *Copy*, which was delivered in the *Sermon*, in the Story of MAY. I know not what *Hint* you aim at. I am certain, in the Delivery, I aim'd at no one but MAY; nor did I ſuſpect any Body would think I meant any one elſe.

You ſpeak of it as ſtrange, That "I ſhould aſcribe ſuch *Force of Oratory* to him" but is this any other than Dr. MATHER himſelf has done? 'Tis true, he calls him a *ſilly ſhallow* Perſon; but does he not alſo give an Account of *ſuch Effects* produced by him, as are a *full Juſtification* of the *Hint* I gave of the *Force of his Oratory?* Does he not compare his *Succeſs* in BOSTON to the Succeſs of MAHOMET? Does he not *repreſent* his *Utterance* and *Action* to be *ſo plauſible*, as that Abundance of People became ſo fiercely ſet for him, that they poured out a Thouſand Expreſſions of Rage upon the *faithful Paſtors* of the Town, that tho't him not worthy to be ſet up in the publick Pulpits? And as the ſureſt Argument of the *Power of his Oratory*, Does not the *Doctor* declare, That he *open'd the People's Pockets*, as well as mov'd *their Paſſions*, to his being enrich'd

rich'd with many Pounds of their Substance? Let any one read the Account of this MAY in the Doctor's *Magnalia*, and say whether I attributed too much to the *Force of his Oratory*.

You finish my Concern with MAY, with the *sly Insinuation*, that I meant *some one* else besides MAY; but I tell you and all the World, I meant no *Mortal* else.

After another long Digression, --- You tell me, "If you are mistaken about the *Tendency* of my Sermon, you shall be heartily sorry for it." I presume you will be, sooner or later, sorry for your *uncharitable* Intimations about it.

You observe, "'Tis an *unpleasing* Thing to you, to take this Notice of the Sermon": To which I must say, (for so I think) that there are many Things which intimate your *Pleasure* in what you have done.

You then suggest, "That you wrote to me, not to *print* my *Sermon*, and that I did not regard your Remonstrance." I own it: But I did not know but I might print as well as Mr. COOPER, when desired: However, if it be *necessary*, the next Time I'll endeavour to get your *Imprimatur*.

You proceed to ask whether "this was kind Usage of a Brother, who desired me to preach out of RESPECT TO ME, and not for YOUR OWN EASE." I leave Others to judge, whether I may not, with *more Reason*, return back the Question. I assure you, *Sir*, it was not for the Sake of *honouring* myself, but *easing* you, that I went into your Pulpit; and *your own Conscience* (to the Dictates of which it was owing that you wrote against me) best knows with which of these Views you sent to me to preach; tho' the World also may make some Judgment. For you know you enquired me out on the *Sabbath*, and sent after me to my Lodging; and it was with an *Importunity greater* than I am commonly us'd to, that I was besought to preach for you. And after this, to make such a Representation as you have done to the World, I believe it will be as little to your *own Honour* as to mine: Nor could I have Tho't, you would have attributed this *Publication* to a "*Fondness* in me for *Printing*."

I

I diſpiſe the Inſinuation ; but forbear making ſuch Recriminations as, I believe, the World would think juſt. I ſhall only ſay, I hope Gentlemen for the future, will be Cautious how they Preach for you, for *whatever Pains* may be taken with them to obtain their Preaching, they may be treated as I have been, in a very *uncivil*, not to ſay abuſive Manner.

You then go on to tell us, how cautious the *Miniſters* of BOSTON ſhould be, ſince they have *ſuch Influence over the Country*. There are among the Miniſters of *Boſton* whom we Value and Reverence : But I dont think every one of them has *ſuch Influence* over the *Country* ; and perhaps Mr. COOPER himſelf imagines he has much more than he has in fact.

Thus, *Sir*, I have made ſome Reply to yours. As there are many Things in it that relate to others, I truſt they may take Occaſion to Remark as well as I. I Conclude by intreating you to read the *Sermon* without Prejudice, and apply Saint *Paul*'s Diſcription of CHARITY to your *Paper* of *Remarks* upon my Sermon.

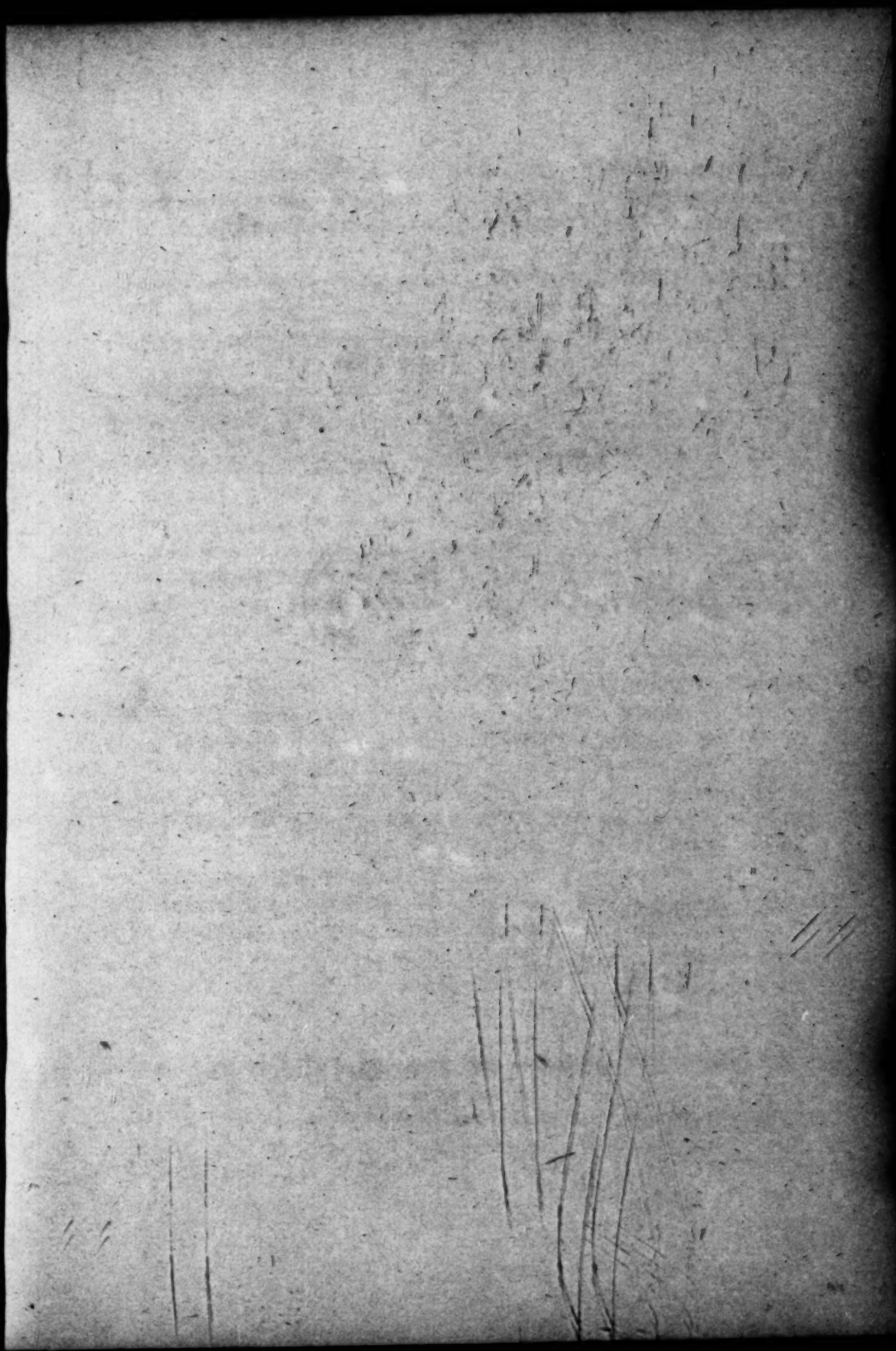
Deerfield, Dec. 17.
1743.

I remain,

Your injur'd Friend

and Servant,

J. ASHLEY.

Sold by *S. Eliot* in *Cornhil.* 1743.

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